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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2743  
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN PRIORITY  
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY  
AMEMBASSY RIYADH PRIORITY  
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 BEIRUT 02370

E.O. 12356: DECL: OADR  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [LE](#)  
SUBJECT: SOUTH LEBANON: THE ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL  
CONTINUES WHILE NEW EFFORTS ARE MADE TO BRING PEACE  
TO SIDON

REFS: (A) BEIRUT 2330, (B) TEL AVIV 6070

11. CONFIDENTIAL - ENTIRE TEXT.

12. ISRAEL REPORTEDLY CONTINUES CONTACTS AIMED AT USING INDIGENOUS FORCES TO MAINTAIN BORDER SECURITY AFTER THE JUNE 1 WITHDRAWAL OF ISRAELI TROOPS. ACCORDING TO LOCAL PRESS, THE ISRAELIS HAVE REACHED A COMPROMISE WITH THE DRUZE OF THE HASBAYA REGION WHEREBY THE DRUZE INHABITANTS WILL FORM A "CIVIL GUARD," BUT WILL NOT HAVE DIRECT TIES TO THE ASL OR ANY OTHER ISRAELI-BACKED ORGANIZATION. IF THESE REPORTS ARE TRUE, THIS DEAL REPRESENTS A VICTORY FOR THE LOCAL DRUZE WHO HAVE ALLEGEDLY BEEN RESISTING ISRAELI PRESSURE (WHICH INCLUDED A BLOCKADE OF THE VILLAGES OF AKA KAMA AND MIMAS) TO RECRUIT THEM INTO THE ASL.

13. IN THE JAZZIN AREA, LOCAL PRESS REPORTS THAT EFFORTS ARE UNDERWAY TO ESTABLISH A 300-400 MAN CHRISTIAN FORCE INDEPENDENT OF THE ASL. THESE REPORTS SUPPORT OTHER INFORMATION THE EMBASSY HAS RECEIVED CONCERNING A DEAL ALLEGEDLY STRUCK BETWEEN WALID JUMBLATT AND THE CHRISTIANS OF JAZZIN CONCERNING SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS FOR JAZZIN AND THE IQLIM AL-KHARRUB. DETAILS WERE REPORTEDLY HAMMERED OUT AT A MEETING HELD LAST WEEK IN MUKHTARA ATTENDED BY JUMBLATT, JEAN AZIZ, JAZZIN DEPUTY EDMOND RIZK, AND AN UNIDENTIFIED ISRAELI OFFICER. AT THIS MEETING, JUMBLATT REPORTEDLY ACCEPTED THE FORMATION OF THIS CHRISTIAN FORCE, PROVIDED IT HAD NO OVERT CONNECTION WITH THE ASL; HE ALSO APPARENTLY SAID HE WOULD NOT ATTACK THE CHRISTIANS OF THE JAZZIN AREA OR THE IQLIM AL-KHARRUB AND OFFERED TO OPEN THE CHUF ROAD TO CHRISTIAN TRAFFIC IF THE COASTAL ROADS WERE CLOSED TO THEM. IN RETURN, JUMBLATT ASKED FOR AN OPEN ROAD FROM THE CHUF TO THE DRUZE VILLAGES OF HASBAYA AND ROSHAYYA IN THE SOUTH, AND REMOVAL OF LF ELEMENTS FROM OUTSIDE THE AREA.

14. IN SIDON, THE TWO AXES OF CONFRONTATION REMAINED ACTIVE OVER THE WEEKEND. ONE FRONT PITS LF FIGHTERS IN THE VILLAGES OF ABRA, HLALIYAH, AND QAYYA (SOUTHEAST OF SIDON) AGAINST SUNNI AND PALESTINIAN MILITIAMEN SUPPORTED BY THE LAF'S SUNNI TAWEED 98TH BRIGADE FROM TRIPOLI LOCATED ON THE HILL OF MAR ELIAS. ON THE OTHER FRONT, ALSO LOCATED IN THE EASTERN SUBURBS, LF MILITIAMEN BASED IN THE VILLAGES OF MIYAH MIYAH, MAGHDUSHEH, AND DARB AL-SIM CONFRONT THE PALESTINIAN CAMPS OF MIYAH MIYAH AND AYN AL-HILWAH. ON FRIDAY AND SATURDAY, FOR THE FIRST TIME, 155 MM SHELLS FELL ON THE LAF'S ZGHAYB BARRACKS IN CENTRAL SIDON. LOCAL PRESS REPORTS CASUALTY FIGURES AS HIGH AS 26 KILLED AND WOUNDED IN WEEKEND FIGHTING.

15. ON THE POLITICAL FRONT, SIDON DEPUTY NAZIH BIZRI, CLAIMING TO HAVE LOST ANY HOPE FOR LAF REINFORCEMENT OR LF WITHDRAWAL, CALLED APRIL 19 ON THE CITIZENS OF SIDON TO TAKE UP ARMS IN THEIR OWN DEFENSE. USAMA SAAD, VP OF THE "NASSERITE POPULAR ORGANIZATION," WHO HAD ACCOMPANIED BIZRI TO DAMASCUS EARLIER IN THE WEEK, ALSO CALLED UPON THE AREA'S

CHRISTIAN VILLAGERS "TO FORCE THE LF FROM THEIR VILLAGES SO THEY DON'T BECOME THE TARGETS OF A MILITARY SOLUTION."

¶6. IN CONTRAST TO THE INFLAMMATORY RHETORIC EMANATING FROM SIDON'S MUSLIMS, THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY SEEMS INTENT ON DAMPING DOWN THE LEVEL OF TENSION. FOLLOWING A VISIT TO ISRAEL (REF B) DURING WHICH HE WAS REPORTEDLY WARNED BY THE ISRAELIS NOT TO MAKE TROUBLE IN SIDON, AND AFTER A WEEKEND OF CONSULTATIONS WITH FORMER PRESIDENT CAMILLE CHAMOUN, SAMIR JA'JA' HELD A MORNING PRESS CONFERENCE ON APRIL 22 TO ANNOUNCE LF MEASURES AIMED AT DEFUSING THE CRISIS. ALTHOUGH WE HAVE NOT SEEN THE TEXT OF JA'JA'S STATEMENT, WE UNDERSTAND THESE TO INCLUDE:

-- A. A UNILATERAL CEASEFIRE EFFECTIVE 1600 LOCAL TIME ON APRIL 22;

-- B. A WITHDRAWAL OF NON-INDIGENOUS LF FORCES FROM THE SIDON AREA BEGINNING 1100 LOCAL TIME ON APRIL 23. THIS WITHDRAWAL IS IN ORDER TO "GIVE THE CENTRAL GOVERNMENT A CHANCE TO UNDERTAKE ITS RESPONSIBILITIES." (MILITIAMEN NATIVE TO THE AREA WILL REMAIN);

-- C. A CALL FOR THE PRESIDENT, PM, GOVERNMENT, AND LAF COMMAND TO ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY FOR SECURITY VIOLATIONS.

JA'JA' FURTHER STATED HIS HOPE THAT THESE MEASURES WOULD CONSTITUTE A FIRST STEP TOWARD A SETTLEMENT AND CALL FORTH PEACE INITIATIVES FROM THE OTHER PARTIES INVOLVED. HE INVITED JOURNALISTS TO WITNESS TOMORROW'S WITHDRAWAL.

¶7. ON THE MILITARY LEVEL, THE QUADRIPARTITE MILITARY COMMISSION IS REPORTED BY THE PRESS TO BE WORKING FOR THE DEPLOYMENT OF AN ADDITIONAL LAF UNIT TO SIDON. NO DETAILS OF ARMAMENT OR CONFSSIONAL COMPOSITION ARE AVAILABLE. IN ANY EVENT, PAST HISTORY INDICATES THAT IT CANNOT BE DEPLOYED IN THE ABSENCE OF A PRIOR POLITICAL AGREEMENT.

¶8. ONE USUALLY WELL INFORMED LOCAL PRESS SOURCE TELLS US THAT SYRIA IS TRYING TO PUT IN PLACE A SCENARIO WHEREBY SUNNIS OF SIDON CAN CLAIM VICTORY OVER THE LF AS A SOP FOR RECENT SUNNI LOSSES IN WEST BEIRUT. THE PRICE OF SUCH A DEAL, HOWEVER, IS ALLEGED TO BE RENUNCIATION BY SUNNIS OF THEIR LINKS WITH PRO-ARAFAT PLO PALESTINIANS AND ACCEPTANCE OF RELIANCE UPON DRUZE AND ABU MUSA PALESTINIANS IN THEIR STEAD. THE ALTERNATIVE, ACCORDING TO THIS SOURCE, IS FOR DRUZE, ABU MUSA MILITIA, AND AMAL TO ADMINISTER THE SAME LESSON IN SIDON THAT THEY DID IN WEST BEIRUT.

¶9. IN TYRE, ISRAELI FORCES CONTINUE THEIR PREPARATIONS FOR WITHDRAWAL. IDF SPOKESMEN HAVE ANNOUNCED A WITHDRAWAL DATE OF APRIL 24, BUT ACTIVITIES ON THE GROUND INDICATE IT MAY OCCUR UP TO 24 HOURS EARLIER. ALL BUILDINGS AND INSTALLATIONS OF POTENTIAL USE TO THE RESISTANCE ARE BEING DYNAMITED, THERE IS AS YET NO WORD ON POSSIBLE LAF DEPLOYMENT AFTER THE ISRAELI WITHDRAWAL.

BARTHOLOMEW